
FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION(S)

Submitted by: Monitoring working group

Finding:

The current system in place to monitor the implementation of fuels reduction projects places an undue burden on the individual contractors and non-federal entities that implement the projects.

Background and Supporting Evidence: *(A short statement justifying the Finding and describing desired outcome(s); usually no more than half a page.)*

Fuels treatment projects have been conclusively demonstrated to reduce the fire severity of wildfires including the Angora Fire (USDA 2007). Monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of fuels treatment projects in the Tahoe basin is an important activity that will assess the implementation and effectiveness of treatments and so allow for adaptive management. Monitoring is also important to assure stakeholders and funders that allocated funds are well spent.

However, many small entities such as Fire Safe Councils and fire departments do not have staff qualified to undertake more complex types of data collection such as instream water quality monitoring. These additional monitoring requirements impede project implementation by taking up staff time and reducing the number of projects that may be undertaken. The application of adaptive management science to protect the Tahoe Basin environment is jeopardized when complex monitoring data collection responsibilities are not placed on those most qualified to conduct them.

- a. There exist three basic kinds of monitoring:
 1. Implementation monitoring - verifying that fuels treatment projects have been implemented as designed and that they meet project approval conditions.
 2. Effectiveness monitoring - verifying that projects have successfully met their objectives including reducing fuel loads and protecting water quality.

3. Validation monitoring - verifying that the successfully carried out fuels treatment projects actually reduce fire risk and moderate fire behavior as desired.
- b. Implementation monitoring is an activity currently carried out by all implementers who carry out fuels treatment projects through the contract administration process.
- c. The way that effectiveness and validation monitoring are currently carried out is cumbersome and a barrier to project implementation. Some non-federal project implementers are currently required to collect complex effectiveness and/or validation monitoring data which creates numerous practical problems including:
 1. Funding problems, because monitoring extends beyond project grant cycles.
 2. Workload problems, extending continuing attention to otherwise-completed projects competing with the capacity to implement new projects.
 3. Expertise problems, in that project implementers are not trained to do the technical work that some more complex monitoring protocols require. Although substantial monitoring data has been obtained, it has seldom (if ever) been evaluated or summarized to determine its utility.

Recommendation(s) *(Based upon an analysis of the Finding, the following recommendation(s) should be made to the Governors):*

- a. Request that agencies involved in permitting fire risk reduction projects for non-federal entities (state agencies, local fire districts, and fire safe councils) assume responsibility for effectiveness and validation monitoring permit requirements.
- b. Request that agencies involved in implementing be responsible for implementation monitoring.
- c. Request that agencies involved in permitting to assist non-federal entities in developing the organizational capacity to carry out permit requirements for performance of implementation monitoring.

Impacts of Implementation: *(The implementation of any Recommendation is likely to have specific impacts. Consider potential consequences related to each of the following areas):*

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is REQUIRED (Best Estimate):

- a. Cost: Unknown, depends on the how the monitoring program is organized.

- b. Funding source: Redirect existing project funds spent on monitoring, depending on funding source. Possible added funds where funding sources don't allow.
- c. Staffing: Use existing staffs, or add with funding provided through projects.
- d. Existing regulations/laws: Would comply with existing project approval conditions, but improve adaptive management by improving effectiveness monitoring.
- ☐
 - ☐ Funding source
 - ☐ Staffing
 - ☐ Existing regulations and/or laws

Analysis of impacts on the following factors is OPTIONAL:

- ☐ Operational
- ☐ Social
- ☐ Political
- ☐ Policy
- ☐ Health and Safety
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Interagency

Reference:

USDA, 2007. An Assessment of Fuel Treatment Effects on Fire Behavior, Suppression Effectiveness, and Structure Ignition on the Angora Fire. US Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, R5-TP-025.